DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 371 731 IR 016 704

TITLE	Pathway to the Future: A Report from the Distance Learning Committee to the Kansas Library Network Board.
INSTITUTION	Kansas Library Network Board, Topeka.
PUB DATE	Aug 93
NOTE	15p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Kansas Library Network Board, Kansas State Library, Capitol Bldg. 3rd Floor, Rm. 343, Topeka, KS 66612-1593.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Access to Education; Access to Information; Computer Networks; Cooperative Planning; *Distance Education; Educational Change; *Educational Cooperation; Futures (of Society); Higher Education; Information Needs; Library Networks; *Library Role; *Library Services; Nontraditional Education; Public Libraries; State Programs; Telecommunications
IDENTIFIERS	*Information Infrastructure; Kansas; *Kansas Library Network Board

ABSTRACT

The Kansas Library Network Board (KLNB) appointed a Distance Learning Committee to investigate the possibilities for more effective cooperative arrangements between institutions sponsoring distance learning classes and local libraries. This document contains two sets of recommendations to the KLNB. The first set describes how the KLNB might assist Kansas in building the information infrastructure it needs for the future. The second set describes how the KLNB might provide immediate relief to libraries serving distance learners. The report examines the current distance learning environment in Kansas, emerging issues for distance education, the information explosion and its implications for libraries, and the Kansas state information infrastructure. (JLB)

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Pathway to the Future

A report from the Distance Learning Committee to the Kansas Library Network Board

August 1993

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 1991-92 academic year, more than 28,000 students enrolled in off-campus courses taught by Kansas colleges and universities and an additional number of Kansans enrolled in off-campus courses taught by out-of-state institutions. Although many of these students require library services to complete their course assignments, libraries have difficulty meeting their needs. Recognizing the importance of distance learning to training and retraining the Kansas workforce, the Kansas Library Network Board (KLNB) appointed a Distance Learning Committee to investigate the possibilities for more effective, cooperative arrangements between institutions sponsoring distance learning classes and local libraries --- libraries in the communities where those classes are offered.

After investigating the current environment and the effects of the information explosion and rapidly advancing and changing information technologies, the Distance Learning Committee concluded that the problems of distance learners today foretell the problems of all information seekers tomorrow. As the volume of information produced and the number of people who work with information and who need access to this information continues to grow, libraries will experience increasing demands for services. The emergence of powerful information technologies will provide the tools necessary to keep pace with the information explosion and growth in knowledge workers if Kansas can develop a modern information infrastructure that includes information resources, information technologies, human partnerships, skill building, and policies.

This vision of the future predicts a new era for Kansas libraries. It predicts that libraries will become nodes on information networks --- part of a logical network of information resources that creates the "library without walls" of the future. The Distance Learning Committee recommends that the KLNB take a leadership role by encouraging and supporting the exploration and development of a new paradigm for library services through a series of specific initiatives listed at the conclusion of this document.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Distance Learning Committee offers two sets of recommendations to the Kansas Library Network Board. The first set describes how the KLNB might assist Kansas in building the information infrastructure it needs for the future. The second set describes how the KLNB might provide immediate relief to libraries serving distance learners today.

The Kansas Library Network Board should take a leadership role in developing the modern information infrastructure for Kansas described on page 11.

1. The KLNB should enhance awareness among librarians and among KLNB members of state, national, and international networks, including NREN and the Internet.

    a. The KLNB should sponsor educational programs that inform the Kansas library community and the KLNB about NREN and the Internet, including existing and potential applications on the network, issues related to electronic information resource sharing, and the implications for the role of libraries and library professionals. To participate in these programs, libraries should agree to sponsor similar educational programs for their clients.

    b. The KLNB should seek proposals from libraries to develop and implement pilot projects to explore NREN and the Internet and to demonstrate the usefulness for library users. The goal of each project should be to develop a model for network involvement.

    c. The KLNB should disseminate information about successful networking initiatives and projects.

    d. The KLNB should develop and disseminate information about connecting to the Internet.

2. The KLNB should modify its policies and allow Interlibrary Loan Development Program (ILDP) funds to be used for promoting:

    distribution of databases among resource libraries;

    development of indexes, databases and other information in electronic formats; and

    acquisition of electronic information resources.

3. The KLNB should develop working partnerships with other state agencies in building an electronic information highway for Kansas. This effort should include taking a leadership role in designing and providing responsive and accessible training and technical support systems for libraries.

4. The KLNB should work with and support other library network advocates, Regents librarians, etc. to explore funding options and seek the funds necessary to obtain modern information technologies for Kansas libraries.

5. The KLNB should build a statewide coalition to respond to a statement by Senator Bob Dole at the Mid-America Computers in Education (MACE) Conference in Manhattan, Kansas on May 6, 1993. Senator Dole challenged leaders in Kansas to work with the Kansas delegation in Washington, D.C. to "...work out a strategy for Kansas." He said, "As I look at it, distance just doesn't matter when information is travelling at close to the speed of light...[C]ommunications technology and services will eliminate these obstacles, and I'm convinced they will play an important role in meeting the needs of rural America."

6. The KLNB should support efforts to build NREN and seek the inclusion of <u>all</u> libraries in it.

7. The KLNB should convene a committee to investigate the potential benefits and costs associated with networking among reference librarians. The committee should explore the strategies and mechanisms for implementing reference networking among Kansas libraries.

The Kansas Library Network Board should seek to provide immediate relief to libraries serving distance learners.

1. The KLNB should encourage postsecondary institutions and all types of libraries to cooperatively plan to meet the information needs of distance learners today.

2. The KLNB should sponsor a committee to develop a distance learner's bill of rights for use by faculty and librarians. This document should outline library services and resources students have a right to expect from the parent institution and library community.

3. The KLNB should sponsor a committee to draft model contracts, agreements and vouchers for reimbursement systems for use by the library community.

4. The KLNB should support development of a statewide overnight document delivery system to facilitate sharing of serials, monographs, and audio and video resources which complement electronically delivered information.

INTRODUCTION

Kansas has a large number of postsecondary students enrolled in courses taught at off-campus locations throughout the state. In the 1991-92 academic year, 28,375 students enrolled in off-campus courses taught by Kansas colleges and universities and an additional number of Kansans enrolled in off-campus courses taught by out-of-state institutions. These "distance learners" are often non-traditional students --- students 25 years and older, students under 25 years of age who did not proceed directly to college, students attending college part-time, or students returning to college after an absence of at least a year. Since many non-traditional students are members of the Kansas workforce, the quality of the education they receive has a direct bearing on the Kansas economy and its place within a complex and competitive world marketplace.

The Kansas Library Network Board's (KLNB) Long Range Plan for Library Cooperation recognizes the need for new strategies to serve the information needs of Kansans who are enrolled in distance learning classes. Since these students often live hundreds of miles away from the sponsoring institutions, they turn to nearby libraries rather than the academic library at the institution where they are enrolled when seeking information needed to complete course assignments.

Serving distance learners raises concerns about what roles and funding are appropriate for local libraries and for libraries at the institutions sponsoring distance learning programs. Objective 4.6 of the Plan calls for the Network Board to sponsor research to address distance learning issues. According to this objective,

> research should result in specific recommendations concerning services a student can expect from the educational institution and local library. It should result in recommendations for establishing effective cooperative arrangements between institutions sponsoring distance learning classes and libraries in the communities where those classes are offered.

To fulfill this objective, the Network Board appointed the Distance Education Committee in September 1992. Chaired by Barbara Paschke, the KLNB's representative from the Kansas Board of Regents, the committee includes representatives from various types and sizes of libraries in Kansas, plus a faculty member from the School of Library and Information Management at Emporia State University. (See inside back cover for a complete list of committee members.) The Committee's report to the KLNB follows.

THE CURRENT DISTANCE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Distance Learners: Responding to Economic Realities. Why are people returning to education? "The changing world of work brings lots of people back," says Harvey Stedman, dean of New York University's School of Continuing Education. Data confirm his observation. In a recent national survey of adult students, 64% cited job-related reasons for enrolling in courses.

Clearly, people recognize that changes are taking place in the workforce --- changes that require more workers to be educated and skilled. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that by the year 2000, occupational groups requiring the highest levels of education will grow in number more rapidly than other occupational groups. The number of executives, administrators, managers, professional specialists, and technicians will grow while the number of secretaries, farm workers, machine operators, and people employed in manufacturing industries will decline. According to Workforce 2000, occupations expected to grow most rapidly are lawyers and judges; natural, computer and mathematical scientists; and health diagnosing and treating occupations.

Higher Education: Responding to Student Needs. Kansans seem to understand that the world of work is changing and they are taking steps to prepare for jobs of the future by enrolling in off-campus courses. At colleges and universities, courses in education, social science, business and management, library and archival sciences, literature, health sciences, and public affairs courses enroll the greatest number of distance learners. At community colleges, vocational courses such as allied health, nursing, and business, and courses that are part of the basic transfer curriculum enroll the greatest number of distance learners.

In the past, most college and university programs --- including library programs --- were designed to serve on-campus students, not the adult whose responsibilities may include a family and full-time job, whose knowledge may include extensive life experience, and whose commitment to and expectations of higher education may be more focused. Colleges and universities are responding to the challenges of distance learning. Increasingly, they are adapting their programs to serve the distance learner. In addition to correspondence courses and off-campus courses taught by instructors traveling to distant sites, courses are now delivered using audiotape, videotape, telephone conference, and television --- all of which can increase access to higher education among populations unable to travel to on-campus courses.

The Telecommunications Infrastructure: Pathway to the Future. In Kansas, a growing telecommunications infrastructure is expanding off-campus learning opportunities. Various telecommunications systems using technologies such as fiber optics, microwave, compressed video, cable television, satellite and broadcast television are being operated by schools, colleges, universities, private businesses, public broadcasting stations, and

state government. In addition, there are sixty-one out-of-state network/providers of satellite educational programming and information capable of delivering their services to Kansans.

According to A Plan for Telecommunications in Kansas developed by the Kansas State Board of Education, sharing human resources and access to information through a telecommunications infrastructure will promote a high quality of life in the twenty-first century. For Kansas to have a favorable economic future, the state must capitalize on its two most valuable resources: information and people. Communities will need to participate in training and retraining, business and economic development; they will need to become learning communities to compete in a global marketplace.

Information Seekers: Challenging the Status Quo. To obtain the breadth and depth of information needed to complete course assignments, distance learners find they cannot depend on a single information resource; rather, they seek information from a variety of resources including local libraries, nearby academic libraries, and the academic library at the institution where they are enrolled. Nursing students in Hays may need medical information from the library at the University of Kansas Medical Center, teachers in Dodge City may need information from the library at Fort Hays State University, public affairs students in Pittsburg may need information from the law library at Washburn University, and business students in Salina may need information from the patent library in Wichita.

The quest for information, wherever it may reside, presents many challenges to distance learners and to the librarians who serve them.

* The students may not be information literate. They may lack the skills necessary to locate, retrieve, organize, and use information from a multitude of sources.

* The library staff may not have adequate information skills in the student's area of interest.

* Information may need to be borrowed from other libraries.

* Funding and staffing for interlibrary loan services may not be adequate.

* The library may not be open when the student can get there.

* Needed materials may be on reserve for on-campus classes, and therefore, unavailable to students who cannot get to campus.

* Students may be unaware of library services available to distance learners from the institution where they are enrolled.

* Students may not receive the information they need in a timely manner.

* Information services may not be affordable to libraries and their users.

* Libraries may have policies that prioritize service to their primary clientele, which may include distance learners.

* The library may not have the equipment or telecommunications connections necessary to access remote information resources electronically.

Each of these challenges suggests that the channel to information is not as clear as it could be. Kansas can do better. Our state must find the means to provide people with responsive, timely, accurate information in an appropriate format. It must also evaluate information services and improve them to better fit user needs. To meet its responsibility, Kansas must plan for the library and information services its citizens need now and tomorrow since the need for these services will continue to grow.

EMERGING ISSUES

The experiences of distance learners serve to focus attention on the challenges most citizens will encounter if they search for specialized information: research skills, access, funding, staffing, policies, and the infrastructure are not all they need to be. This raises several issues.

1. **Are there better ways to get information to the people who need it?**

2. **Are there solutions to today's challenges that will lead us into tomorrow's world?**

3. **What will tomorrow's world of information be like and how can libraries plan for that world?**

To ignore these issues is to forget the important role information plays in virtually every human enterprise. Information about markets, transportation, telecommunications and the workforce are important in making business decisions just as information about recent medical research can save a patient's life. Kansans cannot afford to be the last to know or not to know at all; Kansans need to enrich their information environment.

THE INFORMATION EXPLOSION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR LIBRARIES

The Information Explosion: A Growth Industry. The production of information continues to increase at rates greater than library budgets. In the United States alone, over 1,200 companies produce or distribute information databases. In Japan, the number is 210 and growing. Add to this the number of new scholarly journals, books, magazines, and other print materials as well as information stored in various electronic formats and it becomes clear that information production is a major growth industry with consumers and producers throughout the world.

Implications for Libraries: A New Era. As the quantity of information grows, libraries may own an increasingly smaller proportion of the information they need to satisfy client requests. Most information will be stored at other locations. Alternatively, libraries may own more information in electronic formats, or own the rights to access information stored at other locations. Fortunately, the merging of computer, video and telecommunications technologies is producing an array of information technologies that can rapidly seek, retrieve, transfer, and manipulate large quantities of information, making it possible to connect people electronically to the information they need regardless of its location.

Looking ahead, libraries will need to become nodes on information networks --- part of a logical network of information resources that creates the "library without walls" of the future. Libraries will need to evolve from information warehouses to information utilities delivering timely, convenient, reliable, low-cost, and simple-to-use services to their clients. Users will want access to information from their homes and offices as well as from the library, and not only when the library is open, but at all hours. To provide this level of convenience and access, information will need to be in machine-readable formats. Information retrieval systems will need to be simple to use and relatively fail-safe. To be used at all, these services will need to be affordable to users, libraries and taxpayers alike.

Already, networks such as the National Research in Education (NREN) network and INTERNET, a network of networks that spans the globe, are developing as the information conduits of the future. Access to these networks and the information on them will become vital to communities in the same way that access to waterways, railroads, highways and the products and services they can deliver is vital to communities today.

Librarians and their clients will need to develop the information literacy skills necessary to access and manipulate information in a variety of formats, in a variety of places, and through a variety of interconnected systems. Training and retraining to keep pace with technological changes in information systems will be important at the outset. Even after the systems become "user friendly," information seekers will continue to need training and retraining to exploit the full potential of software to seek, search, request, transfer, store, and manipulate information as the user commands.

Since individual librarians will not have all the knowledge, tools, information resources, and access required to assist every patron, librarians and especially reference librarians will need to share information resources as well as research skills and subject expertise. Informal networks of reference librarians --- "reference networks" --- are already forming in Kansas as librarians discover their common need for mutual support.

THE INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE

To serve distance learners and all information seekers, the State of Kansas will need to take a leadership role in the world of information as it is emerging. Kansas will need to develop a modern information infrastructure with five major components.

1. **Information Resources.** Most library collections today reflect the needs of the library's local or regular clientele, with some consideration given to how the collection fits into the needs of the state or region as a whole. As technology provides the ability to access information regardless of its location, complementary rather than duplicative collections will become increasingly important to maximize information availability while minimizing costs.

2. **Information Technologies.** To access information, libraries will need equipment and software, electronic networks, and connections to these networks. They will also need catalogs, indices and other information resources in machine-readable form. Today, many libraries in Kansas lack any of these components, and the State is just beginning to consider statewide access to information as a funding and governance issue.

3. **Information Partnerships.** Human networking is as important as electronic networking in any information infrastructure. The ability of all librarians to work together to share their research expertise and special skills will contribute to the quality of service and to the satisfaction of all information seekers.

4. **Information Literacy.** Continuing education and training will be necessary to develop, store, access, retrieve, transfer, and repackage information in electronic formats and along electronic highways. Without advanced skills among librarians and users, advanced information systems will bring little return on investment to the state.

5. **Information Policies.** Networks by their very nature require collaboration, cooperation, adherence to standards, common practice, and partnerships. Policies that stress these values can direct efforts and fiscal resources toward the development and maintenance of a cost-efficient and useful information infrastructure for Kansas.

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